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SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE BRIEFS DIPLOMATS ON JULY 15 FOREIGN
MINISTERS' MEETING

REF: RIYADH 5601

11. (U) Arab League Chief of Staff Hisham Youssef briefed diplomats July 18 on the three resolutions approved by the Arab League foreign ministers on July 15. He also gave some of the atmospherics of the meeting. According to Youssef, the foreign ministers agreed that the Israelis appeared to be allowed to take any action on the grounds of self defense; that the use of force by Israeli was accepted by the international community, if not approved; that the UN Security Council had failed in its role, and that the peace process had been "handed over" to Israel to do with as it pleases.

12. (U) Youssef described the two strains of thought that emerged from the ministerial. The first was that of the Saudis (reftel), Jordan and Egypt. The second strain, he said, showed "greater understanding" of why Hamas and Hezbollah had acted as they had. Youssef observed that the ministers believed the region has been waiting for a long time for movement on the peace process and that these actions were to be expected. Ministers agreed, he said, that the peace process was seen as a failure, and the international community must expect more extremism, more violence and more acts of terrorism as a result of the frustration that this provoked. The ministers agreed that it was time to refer to issue to the UN Security Council. This did not, Youssef said, imply that they wanted a another Security Council resolution in the next few days, but rather were looking for serious discussion in the longer term, perhaps in September.

Arab League Summit

13. (U) In the afternoon of July 18, Arab League perm reps met to discuss the possibility of a summit. At the end of the meeting, it was announced that eight members, Algeria, Yemen, Sudan, Qatar, the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Djibouti and Egypt, supported a summit. Yemen suggested that one be held July 25. (Note: Support from a two-thirds majority, or 15 countries, is required to call a summit under AL rules.) During his morning briefing, Youssef said that the decision to call a summit would hinge on how AL members view their request to the UNSC to take up the peace process issue. If, he told the diplomats, they see resistance building to this approach over the next 24-72 hours, they will probably call for a summit. If it looks like the UN will deal with the issue in the next few weeks, they may hold off.

JONES